RAJYA SABHA

Friday, 4th December, 2009/13 Agrahayana, 1931 (Saka)

The House met at eleven of the clock,
MR. CHAIRMAN in the Chair.

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ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Food security situation

*221. DR. K. MALAISAMY: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that food security situation in the country at present is not comfortable;

(b) if so, the background of this serious situation;

(c) whether it is due to controllable factors or uncontrollable factors; and

(d) the measures taken to tide over the possible mishap and to avert similar situations in future?

THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, AND FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR) (a) to (d) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) to (d) With high levels of production of rice and wheat during last seasons and resultant comfortable stocks, food security situation in the country at present is manageable. Drought during kharif season in 13 States and subsequent floods in some States have resulted in sizeable reduction in production of foodgrains during kharif, 2009. However, there are adequate stocks of rice and wheat in the country to meet the requirement.

Deficient rainfall during rainy season resulting in drought and excessive rains causing floods are due to natural factors, beyond human control. To contain adverse impact of drought and floods on food security, Government has taken timely and effective measures to minimize losses in crop production during kharif season, maximise the production during succeeding rabi season, augment availability in domestic market and ensure access of poor households to required food.

Food sustaining high food production in the country, Government has initiated various measures.

DR. K. MALAISAMY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman Sir. As the opening batsman, I would like to be not-out, for which I need the grace and generosity of the Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please go ahead with your supplementary....*(Interruptions)*...

DR. K. MALAISAMY: Sir, this is an important question which concerns not only myself, but the entire House, because a major segment of the society belongs to agriculturists. As such, the interest of the agriculturists should be very much taken care of. As far as I am concerned, I am the son of a farmer; I still continue to belong to the farming community. With my background and experience I can speak with some authority.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please, come to the question.

DR. K. MALAISAMY: Sir, there are ever so many issues involved in it. My point is, starting with input, operation, storage, marketing, price, etc., in every aspect, the farmer is finding extremely difficult. My simple point before I ask my supplementary question is...

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. I am afraid all this is not recorded because it is not related to the question.

DR. K. MALAISAMY: In spite of the size of their community, they are a neglected sector; they don't find enough support and they have become a voiceless society in spite of the fact that they command a major share in the vote bank. Sir, coming to my first supplementary ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: We have refined the art of wasting precious moments.

DR. K. MALAISAMY: The well-informed Minister may say that they have taken all measures. But according to me, the measures they have employed and the efforts they have made are totally inadequate. I would like to ask whether in terms of budget allocation, in terms of monetary assistance and other efforts, whether you would go all out, particularly, for the purpose of increasing productivity and marketing, irrespective of the demand and supply factor. Can you ensure that the farming community is sustained in terms of price stabilisation, in terms of research and development and in terms of productivity? That is my first question.

SHRI SHARAD PAWAR: Yes. ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Second supplementary, please.

DR. K. MALAISAMY: Sir, in the answer, he has spoken about uncontrollable factors like flood and drought; in some parts there are floods while in others there is drought. All these natural calamities and uncontrollable factors are there, but can development in science and technology do anything about this? Can you afford to mitigate the effect of such uncontrollable factors? If so, what are the efforts being made?

SHRI SHARAD PAWAR: It is very difficult to say whether we would be able to control drought. This year, 13 States have announced drought in 312 districts. This has substantially affected our Kharif crop. Fortunately, in last leg of monsoon there were good rains. But the good

rains were not only good, they created further problems. In some States like Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and others, a lot of damage has been done because of excessive rains. So, this year, we have suffered because of drought while in some States we have suffered because of excessive rains. It is very difficult for anybody to control such situations. These are all sort of natural calamities. In such situations, the Government of India has definitely taken certain decisions. For instance, though there was a set back in *kharif* crop, we made a lot of efforts to compensate these losses in *rabi* and summer crops. We have provided substantial support to the State Governments by way of giving more subsidy for seeds, providing substantial quantity of agricultural credit and some other facilities with the expectation that additional area should come under these crops. Fortunately, the information which I got regarding, for instance, wheat crop is good. In wheat area, till yesterday, States like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and some other States have reported that there is more area under wheat, and probably the last year was one of the best years in the history of country for wheat production. This year probably we will surpass the last year's production also. These corrective measures were taken and there is a good response. But I will not be able to tell all these details how ultimately we are going to compensate these losses in the *kharif*. But the Government of India has introduced many schemes like *Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana*, National Food Security Mission, Accelerated Irrigation Programme, etc., where a lot of weightage and support has been given for enhancing the production.

SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA: Hon. Chairman, Sir, hon. Minister is an experienced one and he has very * replied in his written reply that it is due to flood and drought. Sir, we have a vast area for agricultural production. There are flood-prone areas; there are drought-prone areas; there are rain-fed areas and there are irrigation-fed areas and we know the calculation how much yield is there and this was addressed by the 53rd NDC Meeting on 29th May, 2007. At that time, they could visualise and they have decided and passed a resolution to increase the production of rice, wheat and pulses through area expansion and productivity enhancement in a sustainable manner. To meet the growing foodgrains demand, they decided to increase the production of rice, wheat and pulses by 10 million tonnes, 8 million tonnes and 2 million tonnes respectively by 2011. So, what have you done in this respect to achieve the target? You just simply say that there is a shortfall because there is a flood or there is a drought. General public and the common men of the country are suffering. The other day, the senior Finance Minister replied that there is a shortfall of sugar production. What to do and how to manage it, we don't know. Prices will go up. Right from pulses, wheat, rice, sugar, oil and everything has gone up and it is beyond the reach of people. I would like to know from the hon. Minister.

SHRI SHARAD PAWAR: The information of the hon. Member that NDC has taken the decision in the year 2007 is absolutely correct. The NDC took the decision that 20 million tonnes

*Expunged as ordered by the Chair.

of additional production has to be there, and for that targets were fixed for wheat, rice and pulses. Rupees five thousand crore have been provided. In the last two years, out of Rs.5000 crore, about Rs.2600 crore have already been released to States. Additional area has been substantially brought under the wheat and we have got the results. Last year the pulses area was not good, but this year area under pulses has been increased. Whatever results we are expecting, we will get them definitely after the completion of crop. Last year our rice production definitely improved, but this year, as I said, there was a set back in the first *kharif* season and that is why about 56 lakh hectares of area was less under the paddy this year. That is why, we will not be able to achieve the target which was fixed. But, the decision of the NDC has been taken very seriously and implemented seriously. I am extremely happy that all the State Governments are also giving full co-operation to execute this decision. That is why, the target which we have fixed up to the year 2011, I think, there should not be any problem to fulfil that target.

SHRI PRASANTA CHATTERJEE: The hon. Minister has said that the situation is manageable at present, and I do not know whether it is affordable too. The Global Hunger Index says that countries that have scored between 20 and 30 points are in alarming position. India's hunger rate has been estimated as 23.9, ranking 65 out of 88 countries much below than Zimbabwe, Uganda and so on. In view of this situation, why is the Government not bringing the Food Security Act to universalise it at the Rs.2 per kilogram, at an affordable price, and this is worth spending for the whole of nation?

SHRI SHARAD PAWAR: The Government of India has taken a conscious decision to introduce a targeted Public Distribution System in this country. This decision has not been taken today; this decision was taken about ten years back. The idea and thinking behind this decision was to target that section of the society which is really vulnerable and which really requires support. The Government of India also took a decision in the year 2000 that the issue price under the Public Distribution System for AAY should be Rs.2 per kilogram for wheat and Rs.3 per kilogram for rice, and that price was fixed in the year 2000. Till today, that is, 2009, we have not changed that price. We have continued with that price because the idea is to protect the interests of that vulnerable section, and that is why, the subsidy bill, which was Rs.19,000 crores five years back, as on today, it has reached to Rs. 60,000 crores.

Regarding the Food Security Bill, preliminary draft will be prepared and circulated to the State Governments. We are expecting comments from the State Governments and after getting all these detailed comments, there is a thinking that we should call the meeting of the Chief Ministers and, then, we should take the collective view about this Bill, and then come to the Parliament. So, we are in that process. We do not want to go back from the commitment which hon. President has already made in her speech. We would like to go ahead with this.

SHRI TIRUCHI SIVA: I am proud to say that the Public Distribution System in Tamil Nadu is universalised and rice is distributed at Rs.1 per kilogram. The State Government is giving an enormous subsidy which is to the tune of Rs.4,000 crores. Unmindful of the burden, the Government wants to protect that system, and for that, the hon. Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu has written to the hon. Minister asking for more allocations. Would the hon. Minister consider increasing the allocation to the State?

SHRI SHARAD PAWAR: I have communicated to the hon. Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu that the Government of India is definitely ready to consider the request. But, the question is that what would be the price. The price, which is fixed by the Government of India, under OMSS for sale to retatil consumer through State Governments is uniform for all the States and that is the price which we have paid to the farmer, *i.e.* M.S.P. and plus transportation from Ludhiana to that destination. So, all these three factors combined together, it will reach to a particular price. It is on no-profit-no-loss basis. The Government of India do not want to earn profit. So, I have written to the Chief Minister that on this price, we are happy to allot additional quantity for APL. Hon. Chief Minister wants that we should take a different approach and instead of this price, it should be BPL price which will be very difficult to accept.

Funds for infrastructure development in universities

*222. SHRIMATI T. RATNA BAI: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether his Ministry has allocated Rs. 400 crores for experiments and infrastructure development in universities; and;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the amount granted to Andhra Pradesh so far?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI KAPIL SIBAL): (a) and (b) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) and (b) A Task Force was constituted by the Central Government in March, 2005, for strengthening of Basic Scientific Research in universities. In its Report, the Task Force, *inter alia*, recommended that for strengthening basic scientific research an amount of Rs.400 crore per annum be provided as support for infrastructure development in universities.

The Government accepted, in principle, the recommendations of the Task Force and converted it into an Empowered Committee for monitoring the implementation of its recommendations. An allocation of Rs.1200 crore has been made in the Eleventh Five Year Plan period (2007-12) for strengthening basic science research in institutions of higher learning, including support for infrastructure development.

As per the information obtained from the audited accounts, the University Grants Commission (UGC) provided a sum of Rs.165.88 crore and Rs.143.57 crore in the years 2007-08 and 2008-09 respectively for implementation of the recommendations of the Task